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110/24**Claims**

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- 5 1. A dehydrated shelf stable vegetable product which comprises a vegetable piece having a moisture content of about 12% or less, having a substantially intact cellular structure, prepared by partially dehydrating vegetable pieces to a moisture content from about 8% to about 30%, compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension, and optionally thereafter further dehydrating the compressed vegetable piece to a moisture content of about 12% or lower, wherein the vegetable piece when placed in water at a temperature of 90°C to 100°C without further application of heat is capable of rehydration substantially to its original fresh dimension and is of edible tenderness and texture instantly or within five minutes.
- 10 2. A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the vegetable is selected from carrots, peas, peppers, tomatoes, sweet corn, onion, squash, chillies, zucchini, mushroom, cabbage, celery, green beans, beetroot, pumpkin, and the like.
- 15 3. A vegetable product according to claim 1 or 2 which includes one or more added solutes.
- 20 4. A vegetable product according to claim 3 wherein said solutes are selected from sodium chloride, potassium chloride, sodium lactate, potassium lactate, sodium citrate, glucose, sucrose, fructose, sorbitol and other water activity controlling solutes.
- 25 5. A vegetable product according to claim 1 having a moisture content from about 2% to about 12%.
6. A vegetable product according to claim 5 having a moisture content from 4% to 6%.

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737879, Jun-16 November, 2000

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7. A method according to claim 1 wherein the vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content which is from about 8% to about 20%.

8. A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the compressed vegetable piece is further dehydrated to a moisture content from about 2% to about 10%.

9. A process for the preparation of a dehydrated, rapidly rehydrating, vegetable product which comprises partially dehydrating vegetable pieces to a moisture content from about 8% to about 30%, compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension, and optionally thereafter further dehydrating the compressed vegetable piece to a moisture content of about 12% or lower, wherein the vegetable piece when placed in water at a temperature of 90°C to 100°C without further application of heat is capable of rehydration substantially to its original fresh dimension and is of edible tenderness and texture instantly or within five minutes.

10. A process according to claim 9 wherein the vegetable is selected from carrots, peas, peppers, tomatoes, sweet corn, onion, squash, chillies, zucchini, mushroom, cabbage, celery, green beans, beetroot, pumpkin, and the like.

11. A process according to claim 9 wherein prior to compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension one or more solutes are added to the piece.

12. A process according to claim 11 wherein said solutes are selected from sodium chloride, potassium chloride, sodium lactate, potassium lactate, sodium citrate, glucose, sucrose, fructose, sorbitol and other water activity controlling solutes.

13. A process according to claim 9 wherein the compressed vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content from about 2% to about 12%.

14. A process according to claim 13 wherein the vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content from 4% to 6%.